

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 1, 2022

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Linda Thomas-Greenfield
U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations
United States Mission to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary Blinken and Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield:

Thank you for your service. We write to express our deep concern regarding the recent and ongoing mass deportations of Haitian migrants from the Dominican Republic to Haiti. Additionally, we request continued updates and prioritization of this urgent matter.

Recent reports¹ indicate that the Dominican Republic has increased its deportations of Haitian migrants and is creating a police unit to investigate foreigners living in “illegal land occupations.”² It is estimated that between August 1, 2022, and October 31, 2022, the Dominican Republic deported nearly “60,000 Haitians and people of Haitian ancestry.”³

On November 12, 2022, the President of the Dominican Republic, Luis Abinader, issued Decree 668-22,⁴ which orders the “National Police . . . to establish a specialized unit for the prevention and prosecution of invasions and irregular occupations of private property and the State.”⁵ The decree does not expressly name “Haitians” as the only migrant group subject to arrest or deportation. However, Haitians have been the main nationality targeted by the decree, as well as Dominicans of Haitian decent and Dominicans who were denationalized by *La Sentencia* in 2013.⁶

On November 19, 2022, the U.S. Embassy in the Dominican Republic issued a Level 2 Travel Advisory Alert citing “Ongoing Dominican Migration Enforcement.”⁷ According to the alert, in

¹ Reuters, *Dominican Republic Steps Up Haitian Deportations, Raising Tensions*, Reuters, Nov. 16, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/dominican-republic-steps-up-haitian-deportations-raising-tensions-2022-11-16/>.

² *Id.*

³ Yawu Miller, *Dominican Government Deporting Haitians*, Bay State Banner, Nov. 16, 2022, <https://www.baystatebanner.com/2022/11/16/dominican-govt-deports-haitians/>.

⁴ Carlos Edill Berríos Polanco, *Widespread Panic as Anti-Haitian Decree Goes into Effect in Dominican Republic*, Latino Rebels, Nov. 17, 2022, <https://www.latinorebels.com/2022/11/17/antihaitiandecree/>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *La Sentencia TC 168-13*, also known as *La Sentencia*, refers to a 2013 ruling by the Supreme Court of the Dominican Republic that retroactively denationalized Dominicans of Haitian descent, whose citizenship had been previously guaranteed from 1929 to 2010.

⁷ U.S. Embassy in the Dominican Republic, *Alert: Ongoing Dominican Migration Enforcement*, U.S. Dept. of State, Nov. 19, 2022, <https://do.usembassy.gov/alert-ongoing-dominican-migration-enforcement/>.

recent months, “travelers to the Dominican Republic have reported being delayed, detained, or subject to heightened questioning at ports of entry and in other encounters with immigration officials based on their skin color.”⁸

The deportation of Haitian migrants run counter to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk’s, recent calls “for deportation to Haiti to stop, given the human rights and humanitarian crises the country is facing.”⁹

As you are aware, on July 7, 2021, the President of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse, was assassinated by foreign mercenaries.¹⁰ Since that time, the Republic of Haiti has been plagued by political instability, as the country lacks a president, has no parliamentary quorum, and has a dysfunctional high court due to a lack of judges.¹¹ Moreover, the country is marred by gang violence, fuel shortages, and a cholera epidemic.¹²

Historically, the Caribbean nations of the Dominican Republic and Haiti have had a contentious and fractured relationship due to migration disputes. In October 1937, then-dictator of the Dominican Republic, Gen. Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, “authorized an ethnic-cleansing campaign along the Dominican-Haitian border with the aim of expunging dark-skinned Haitians.”¹³ The episode is known as the Parsley Massacre¹⁴ and resulted in an estimated 25,000 deaths.¹⁵ Similarly, in 1991, then-dictator and President of the Dominican Republic, Joaquín Balaguer, expelled roughly 14,000 Haitians and Dominican-Haitians after then-Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide criticized Dominican treatment of Haitian migrant workers.¹⁶ Additionally, in 2013, the Supreme Court of the Dominican Republic issued ruling 168-13, which retroactively denationalized Dominicans of Haitian descent, whose citizenship dates back to 1929.¹⁷ In effect, the ruling rendered Dominicans of Haitian descent stateless.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ OHCHR, *Comment by UN High Commissioner Volker Türk on Deportation of Haitians from Dominican Republic*, OHCHR, Nov. 10, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/11/comment-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-deportation-haitians>.

¹⁰ Etant Dupain, et. al., *Haiti President Jovenel Moise Assassinated in Attack on His Residence*, CNN, July 7, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/07/americas/haiti-president-jovenel-moise-attack-intl/index.html>.

¹¹ The World Factbook, *Haiti*, CIA, Nov. 15, 2022, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/haiti/#:~:text=As%20of%20March%202022%2C%20Haiti%20had%20no%20president%2C,km%20%2815%20mi%29%20west%20of%20the%20capital%2C%20Port-au-Prince>.

¹² Natalie Kitroeff, *Gang Warfare Cripples Haiti’s Fight Against Cholera*, Seattle Times, Nov. 19, 2022, <https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/gang-warfare-cripples-haitis-fight-against-cholera/>.

¹³ Michele Wucker, *The Dominican Republic’s Shameful Deportation Legacy*, Foreign Policy, Oct. 8, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/08/dominican-republic-haiti-trujillo-immigration-deportation/#:~:text=The%20Dominican%20Republic%E2%80%99s%20Shameful%20Deportation%20Legacy%20The%20Dominican,of%20Haitians.%20History%2C%20however%2C%20stands%20in%20its%20way>.

¹⁴ The Parsley Massacre refers to the widely-held belief that to test whether those in the borderlands were Dominican or Haitian, soldiers asked inhabitants to say *perejil*, which is Spanish for parsley—a word Haitians were known to have difficulty pronouncing.

¹⁵ Wucker, *supra* note 12.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

Given the historical context of Dominican Republic-Haiti relations, it is evident that race factors into the marginalized treatment of Haitian migrants by the Dominican Republic government. There is widespread video evidence that the National Police are targeting individuals who possess African-like phenotypic (i.e., Black) features and deporting them.¹⁸ Black citizens, residents, and migrants in the Dominican Republic are in such grave danger that even Black Americans have been cautioned against traveling to the country, as they are equally at risk of detention or deportation. If the Dominican Republic continues its discriminatory, anti-Black practices, we fear that Black people from all nations may be subjected to inhumane treatment by the Dominican Republic.

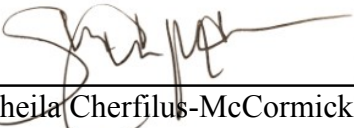
The recent reports of mass deportations of Haitian migrants by the Dominican Republic, as well as the alleged disparate treatment, overt racial discrimination, and disregard for individuals' legal status, are concerning. The United States and the international community must take heed to the public outcries of our Haitian counterparts and act.


Therefore, we respectfully request that the State Department investigate this matter and continue to regularly update Members of Congress on any developments, either in writing or in an unclassified or classified briefing.

Additionally, we request that the international community continue to call for the cessation of forced returns of Haitians to Haiti by all countries in the region, including the Dominican Republic, as the unrelenting gang violence and systematic human rights violations in Haiti do not currently allow for the safe return of Haitians to Haiti.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this critical matter. We appreciate your efforts and are willing and able to provide any support or assistance you may need. Please confirm the receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

¹⁸ Faces of Haiti (@Facesofhaiti), Instagram (Nov. 15, 2022) <https://www.instagram.com/reel/Ck9g9r4pti8/?igshid=MDJmNzVkMjY>.



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